

Guidelines for NJ PHEN Inter-Agency Collaboration

Collaborations between organizations can be very positive, mutually beneficial experiences. With careful consideration to an appropriate collaborative partner and careful planning, collaborative efforts can increase the impact and reach of your agency's initiatives by maximizing resources. Before entering into a collaborative arrangement, it is important to think and plan carefully. Although this is not intended to be a comprehensive list, this document is designed to provide you with some areas to consider before entering into a collaborative agreement as well as to provide some guidelines for the collaborative process.

When Considering a Collaborative Agreement.....

1. Review Your Organization's Mission and Goals

- Make sure you have a clear understanding of the purpose and vision of your agency, including the mission and goals.

2. Research the Potential Collaborative Agency

- What are the organization's mission and goals?
- What is the structure of the organization?
- What personnel will you be working with?

3. Consider the other Agency

- Are the potential collaboration agency's mission and goals compatible with your agency's mission and goals?
- Do both agencies (yours and the potential collaborator) hold similar prevention health beliefs? Do you have similar principles of practice?
- Are the practices of the potential collaborator consistent with your agency's mission, purpose, and guiding values?
- What are the other agency's resources? Do these duplicate or enhance your agency's resources?

4. Consider the Proposed Project

- Make sure you have a clear understanding of the proposed project.
- What are the benefits to your organization of collaborating on this project? What are the benefits to the other agency?
- What will be the balance of power and responsibility between the two agencies? (e.g. will one agency take the lead?)
- What will be expected of each agency in carrying out the project? Be specific.
- What is the project timeline? When would the collaboration begin and end? Be specific.

Forming a Collaboration.....

1. Develop/Establish a Working Relationship with the Other Agency

- A sense of mutual respect and trust must be developed.
- Both groups must have a sense of mutual responsibility for carrying out the proposed project.

2. Clearly Layout/Formalize a Collaborative Agreement

- Clearly identify the responsibilities of each agency for carrying out the project.
- Determine an appropriate start date and end date for the collaborative agreement.
- Establish appropriate paths and schedules of communication (e.g. Who will be the primary contact at each agency? How often will personnel from each agency meet and how?, etc.)
- Identify key milestones to mark project progress, perhaps by developing a project timeline.
- Consider formalizing agreements in a contract or letter of agreement. By documenting the terms and details of the collaboration, both parties can review and consent to the arrangement with confidence.

3. Periodically Review the Agreement

- Once the project is underway, periodically review the agreement. Reviewing the agreement can help to determine project progress by reviewing accomplished tasks according to the time table and ensuring that both agencies are satisfied with the collaboration.